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ABSTRACT

To assess sex role development in Mexican-American males, about 40 kindergarten boys from low middle to very low socioeconomic backgrounds were divided into 2 statistical test groups according to whether their fathers were or were not resident in the home. Data were obtained from toy preference scorings, which followed Biller's 1968 measure: scoring of aggressive independence by teachers and classroom aides: and the It Scale for Children (ITSC), which recorded responses to a figure drawing of a child of anomalous sex. No significant difference in sex-stereotyped responses was found. The results contrasted with Hetherington's 1966 and P. Sears' 1951 findings of less aggressiveness in boys whose fathers were absented before the boys were five years old. Alternate role-models such as older male siblings, uncles or grandfathers in an extended-family setting in Alice, Texas probably prevented disruption of role modelling from absence of fathers as in nuclear families. A quarter of each group identified with a boy with stylish longer hair representing a "girlish boy" stereotype when ITSC originated in 1956. More such sociological studies will aid educators to probe for methods and materials that will result in increased utilization of the educational capabilities of this cultural group. (SC)

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Assessing Sex Role Development Of Kindergarten Mexican-American Boys

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Abstract

Children at very young ages are aware of many sex differences. Since they learn to act in a socially accepted way by imitating the preferences and activities of the parent with whom they identify, psychologists have been concerned with the effects, particularly on boys, of being reared without a father in the home.

The purpose of this study was to assess the sex-role development of kindergarten Mexican-American males. The parameters of the study were the nature, patterns, and differences of sex-role preference in kindergarten Mexican-American males whose fathers were present in the home and those whose fathers were absent from the home.

Forty-nine kindergarten Mexican-American boys from low middle to very low socioeconomic class, ages five years nine months to six years six months, were used as subjects. Twenty-nine percent of the boys in this sample had no father in the home.

The It Scale for Children (ITSC), a sex-role preference scale, a toy preference measure, and a teacher-aide assessment were administered.

This research substanciated the hypothesis that there is no significant difference in sex-role development between kindergarten Mexican-American boys whose fathers were absent and those whose fathers were present in the home.

On the basis of these results, we can conclude that by the time these Mexican-American boys are in kindergarten they have already learned to make culturally expected sex-typed discriminations appropriate to their own sex. In the extended-family structure of Mexican-Americans living in Alice, Texas, it is evident that where a father is not present in the home, sex-roles are learned from older male siblings, uncles or grandfathers. This may not be true in small nuclear Mexican-American families that have moved to metropolitan centers or have achieved higher socioeconomic status and education.

Further studies of this type are especially needed where a significant percentage of the public school population is Mexican-American. Although Federal and State educational programs in recent years have enabled school systems to attempt to meet the specific needs of educating minority groups, their needs will not be met until more data is available. Substancial research is needed in regard to sociological studies of Mexican-Americans in order to enable educators to probe for instructional methods and materials that will result in increased utilization of the educational capabilities of this group.

Background and Related Studies

Psychologists have agreed that there are three essential kinds of experiences that determine the degree to which an individual regards himself as masculine or feminine. Jerome Kagan has listed these as follows: (a) identification with mother, father, parental surrogates, older siblings, and special peers; (b) acquisition of the attributes or skills that define masculine or feminine behavior; (c) a perception that other people regard the individual as possessing appropriate sex-typed characteristics (8, p. 146).

Investigators have designed their own tests to assess sex-typed game preferences. D.G.Brown's It test presents the child with a figure "It" which is ambiguous in respect to sex and a variety of pictures representing toys and objects. The child's choices are assumed to reflect his personal preferences. As early as age three, boys are aware of activities and objects that our culture regards as masculine. Brown's study involved Anglo middle class, kindergarten children from intact nuclear families in Denver, Colorado. He found (a) distinctive sex-role preferences existed for boys and girls at ages studied, (b) kindergarten boys were masculine in their preferences. Brown noted that further research is needed.

Paul Mussen and Eldred Rutherford conducted a study of first grade children of a middle class public school in Berkley, California. The It test and a structured doll play situation were administered to children. The California Psychological Inventories, personal interviews and a questionaire were utilized with both parents of each subject. This

research indicated that sex-roles are learned from parents in early childhood (9).

An extensive test of sex-role development of kindergarten age boys was conducted by Henry Biller using a teacher assessment, a toy preference test and the It Scale. Five general classes of variables were hypothesized as antecedents of masculine development: father availability, father dominence and power, maternal encouragement, intellectual level, and physique. Data suggested that the father's behavior in the home and the degree he is psychologically present are far more important to the boy than the amount of time he is available, unless he is not there at all (1. p. 123).

Using a doll structured play situation P.Sears found that pre-school boys who were separated from their fathers during their early years may be described as being less aggressive, more dependent, and as having fewer masculine self-concepts and game preferences than father-present children (11).

This research coincides with Hetherington's observations by male recreation directors of school-aged boys in a community recreation center. Boys whose fathers were absent scored less masculine on a projective test of sex-role preferences, and were reported to depend more on peers, to assert themselves less, and to engage in fewer physical contact activities than were father-present boys. This occurred only when separation occurred before the age of five. Boys who were six years of age or older at the time of separation did not differ from children reared in a normal home situation (5).

There is conflicting sociological data on the Mexican-American family structure. Kenneth R. Johnson has concluded that Mexican-American family structure very clearly provides the outlines for the roles of male and female members, thus Mexican-American children rarely have any doubts about their role. Boys are encouraged from birth to develop qualities that are clearly masculine (7. p. 2).

Conflicting research gathered by Leo Grebler, Joan W. Moore, and Ralph C. Guzman in an extensive sociological study of Mexican-American people concludes that in fact the extended family household is rare and Mexican-Americans have not escaped the break down of the family (4. p. 582).

Conflicting reports as these point up the fact that more data is needed in the area of sex-role development of kindergarten age Mexican-American males.

It was hypothesized that there would be no significant difference in sex-role development between kindergarten, Mexican-American boys whose fathers were absent and whose fathers were present in the home.

Subjects of this study were 42 Mexican-American males, whose ages ranged from five years nine months to six years six months, enrolled in three kindergarten classes in Alice, Texas. The socioeconomic status of the children, rated by teachers and classroom aides on the basis of parental occupation or means of support, education and ecological area of the child's residence, was from low middle class to very low. Of this group, one child was quarantined with scarlet fever and could not be tested. The sample showed 29 percent to be in homes where the father is absent.

The It Scale for Children (ITSC), a sex-role preference scale developed by Brown (1956) for empirical research, was administered individually in the language most easily understood or comfortably used by the subject.

The ITSC consists of 36 pictures depicting various objects, figures, and activities. The items included in the scale are based on contrasting behavior patterns which are readily identified with masculine or feminine roles. The subject, S, is asked to make choices for It, a semi-projective child-figure drawing unstructured as to sex, which serves as the stimulus vehical for eliciting each of S's choices. Male choices are given a weighted score, the weight varying with the section of the test, while female choices are given zero scores. Subject's total score can range from 0 (all female choices) to 84 (all male choices). A score of 42 would represent an intermediate preference between masculine and feminine roles, while deviations above and below a score of 42 would be in the direction of greater masculinity or greater femininity. An additional dimension was obtained by asking the subject to select a name for It. Administration of the entire scale ranged from seven to ten minutes for each child.

A toy preference test was also administered individually to subjects. Four masculine toys, toy BB gun, football, bulldozer, and racing car, were displayed. One neutral toy, a toy telephone, and three feminine toys, a new-born baby doll, play cosmetics, and a little girl's purse, were also displayed. Toys were arranged intermittenly. Toys used were chosen on the basis of Biller's toy preference assessment (1968). This

was altered to facilitate using actual toys. The toy gun was given the highest masculine rating because of teacher and aide observations that play with guns was highly boisterous and enjoyed greatly by the boys in their classes.

As an additional measure subjects were rated by their classroom teacher and aide through a teacher assessment instrument. Each child was scored from 0 (very low) to 4 (very high) on nine items assumed by Biller (1968) to be characteristic of high masculinity and seven items assumed to be characteristics of low masculinity. This assessment was based on teacher and aide observations in the classroom and on the playground.

The adoption of masculine behavior has many facets. For assessment it was assumed that relative assertiveness, aggressiveness, competitiveness, independence and activity toward physical prowess and mastery of the environment would have to be taken into account. It was also assumed that low masculinity was represented by such behavior as passivity, dependency, and timidity.

Concrete descriptions of each behavior to be rated were given teachers and aides. Time was given to insure that the meaning of each item was understood.

The rating scale consisted of 16 items. Subjects were rated on a five-point scale: very frequently, frequently, sometimes, seldom ana never. Each child was rated individually. Items were scored either zero, 1,2,3,4, and the average of the scores was used as the A score.

Results

It Scale for Children:

Results of the Toy Picture Section indicate choices made by boys whose fathers were present in the home differed little from boys whose fathers are absent from the home. The masculine toys (earthmover, gun, knife, racer, soldiers, train engine, dump truck, and tractor) were the most popular choices of boys in both groups. The father-absent boys did not choose the female toys (necklace, doll, purse, dishes, and baby bath) at all, while the tractor, train engine, gun, racer, and earth-mover were chosen by 100 percent of the boys in this group.

The Eight Paired Pictures section showed another example of the extent of both groups' choices of masculine toys. 97 percent of all choices of father-present boys were masculine while 82 percent of all choices of father-absent boys were masculine.

In the Four Child-Figures section of the ITSC both father-absent and father-present boys expressed a definite preference for being male. Responses to the mixed figures, girlish boy and boyish girl, show that approximately one-fourth of both groups responded to the girlish boy figure. This may be indicative of today's current longer hair styles for males.

In response to the question "What would be a good name for It?", 31 percent of the father-present boys responded with masculine names, 3 percent with an ambiguous name, while 66 percent made no response. Father-absent boys responses were 17 percent masculine, 25 percent

ambiguous, while 58 percent made no response. No feminine responses were made by either group. These results were not substancially representative and do not approach significance.

Distribution of It Scale scores were from 84-47. A score of 42 would represent a relatively intermediate preference on the continuum. Scores above and below 42 would lie in the direction of greater masculine and feminine preference, respectively. 50 percent of father-absent boys scored from 75-84 while 45 percent of father-present boys from 75-84.

Toy Preference Measure:

Distribution of scores concentrated at the extreme masculine end. There was a high correlation between father-absent and father-present scores.

Teacher Assessment:

Two teachers' ratings were available for 30 of the 41 subjects. (One aide was unavailable because of an extended illness.)

In computing a total score where two teachers' ratings were available, the mean score was used. In other cases the score derived from one teacher's ratings was used. Total adoption scores for father-absent boys ranged from 25.5 to 60. Father-present boys' scores ranged from 62-29 with a mean of 41.86 and a standard deviation of 9.32. Father-absent boys' scores ranged from 61-25.5 with a mean of 37.50 and a standard deviation of 9.55. Sex-role adoption was assessed and

and treated according to Biller's study (1) and results confirmed a high adoption of masculine behavior by both father-absent and father-present boys.

In determining relationship between the ITSC scores and teacher-aide assessment, father-present boys correlated 0.5068 using the teachers' assessments and -0.1262 using aides' assessments. Father-absent boys correlated 0.1207 using the teachers' assessments and 0.3567 using aides' assessments. Relationship between the ITSC scores and the mean teacher-aide assessments for father-present boys correlated .0736 and for father-absent boys correlated 0.233. These did not approach significance and only showed teachers were more able to assess sex-role characteristic performance with father-present boys and aides were more able to assess sex-role characteristic performance with father-absent boys. More research is needed in this area.

Summary

On the basis of these results, we can conclude that by the time these Mexican-American boys are in kindergarten they have already learned to make culturally expected sex-typed discriminations appropriate to their own sex. In the extended-family structure of Mexican-Americans living in Alice, Texas, it is evident that where a father is not present in the home sex-roles are learned from older male siblings, uncles or

grandfathers. Strong family ties remain intact.

This may not be true however in small nuclear Mexican-American families that have moved to metropolitan centers or have achieved higher socioeconomic status and education. More research is needed to determine the effects of culture and socio-economic status on the sex-role development of young children.

Studies of this type are especially needed in South Texas where a significant percentage of the public school population is Mexican-American. Although Federal and State educational programs in recent years have enabled school systems to attempt to meet the specific needs of educating minority groups, their needs will not be met until more data is available. Substancial research is needed in regard to sociological studies of Mexican-Americans in order to enable educators to probe for methods and materials that will result in increased utilization of the educational capabilities of this cultural group.

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RANK ORDERS, PERCENTAGES, AND DIFFERENCES OF CHOICES OF FATHER-PRESENT BOYS AND FATHER-ABSENT BOYS ON THE TOY PICTURE SECTION OF THE ITSC

Toy item	Father-absent boys' rank	Father-present boys' rank	Father-absent boys' %	Father-present boys' %	Chi square	Level of confidence
1. Necklace	5	0	21	0	15.9904	.001
2. Tractor	1	1	100	100	.0328	N.S.
3. Doll	8	0	3	0	2.1676	N.S.
4. Dump truck	4	2	90	92	.0883	N.S.
5. Train engine	3	1	93	100	2.9776	N.S.
6. Purse	8	0	3	0	2.1666	N.S.
7. Gun (rifle)	3	1	93	100	2.9776	N.S.
8. High chair	7	5	10	8	.0000	N.S.
9. Cradle	6	5	14	8	.6701	N.S.
10. Racer	2	1	97	100	1.1688	N.S.
11. Dishes	8	0	3	0	2.1666	N.S.
12. Earthmover	1	1	100	100	.0328	N.S.
13. Soldiers	2	2	97	92	1.0122	N.S.
14. Doll buggy	6	4	14	17	.3614	N.S.
15. Knife (pocket)	4	3	90	75	.2163	N.S.
16. Baby bath	7	0	10	0	.0781	Beyond .01
Total choices of male toys			91			
Total choices of female toys			9			

PERCENTAGES AND DIFFERENCES OF CHOICES ON THE EIGHT PAIRED PICTURES SECTION OF THE ITSC

	Father-Present Boys		Father-Absent Boys			
	Male Choice %	Female Choice %	Male Choice %	Female Choice %	Chi square	Level of confidence
Indian princess Indian chief	90	10	92	8	0.2442	N.S.
Trousers and shirt Dress	75	25	92	8	10.4881	S.
Sewing materials Airplane parts	86	14	92	8	1.8386	N.S.
Cosmetic articles Shaving articles	52	48	67	33	4.66853	S.
Mechanical tools Household objects	86	14	75	25	3.8541	S.
Men's shoes Womens's shoes	86	14	100	0	15.05376	S.
Girls playing Boys playing	82	18	67	33	5.92183	S.
Building tools Baking tools	97	3	82	18	11.97126	S.

PERCENTAGES AND DIFFERENCES OF CHOICES

ON THE FOUR CHILD-FIGURES SECTION

OF THE ITSC

Child figure	Father-present boys %	Father-absent boys %	Chi square	Level of confidence
Girl	3	17		
Boyish girl	7	0		
Girlish boy	28	25	2.3809	Beyond 0.20
Boy	62	58		

*Because of small frequencies in several cells, chi square computed by combining Girlish Boy and Boyish Girl choices for both groups.

IT SCALE SCORES

Scores	Father-present boys	Father-absent boys	Total
80-84	7	4	11
75-79	6	2	8
68-72	5	1	6
63-67	5	3	8
56-60	2	1	3
51-55	3	-	3
47-48	1	1	2
N	29	12	41
Median	72.0	69.5	70.33
Mean	70.52	71.42	70.78

Note: $T = 0.26$, $p = 7.10$, N.S.

TOY PREFERENCE SCORES

Scores	Father-present boys (N=29)	Father-absent boys (N=12)	t-value critical ratio	Level of confidence
1	10	5		
2	11	1		
3	7	5		
4	1	1		
5	0	0		
6	0	0		
7	0	0		
8	0	0		
Mean	1.966	2.167		
Median	2.000	2.000	t = -0.62	N.S.
S D	0.8502	1.067		

Teacher Assessment

(Items assumed to be characteristic of high masculinity)

1. "is active and energetic" (on the move, plays hard)
2. "leads other children" (organizes play activities, assigns tasks to others)
3. "participates in sports and active games" (plays rough and tumble games and games where running and balls are involved)
4. "makes own decisions"
5. "daring in play" (first to attempt a physical feat, takes chances in climbing, jumping ect.)
6. "builds and fixes things" (uses blocks and building materials to put things together)
7. "curious"
8. "protects other children"
9. "likes to show strength"

(Items assumed to be characteristic of low masculinity)

1. "asks for help" (acts helpless, wants someone to do something he could do for himself)
2. "is timid around others" (especially new adults and children)
3. "concerned with neatness and cleanliness" (avoids getting clothes dirty, stays away from paints ect.)
4. "clings to adults" (tries to be near teacher, wants to be protected)
5. "gives up easily"
6. "prefers to stay by himself" (solitary games, table play)
7. "complains" (doesn't settle own conflicts and runs to teacher, claims others are hurting him)

Sources: Biller, p.106.